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HINTS ON THE CARE OF RACCOONS.

Location:

The raccoon is a woodland animal and provision should be made for giving it plenty of shade in summer. A deciduous tree in each yard would be an excellent arrangement. A generous supply of pure water is essential to the well-being of these animals and in selecting a site for yards this point should not be overlooked.

Yards:

A yard and a shelter should be provided for each female. The yard should not be smaller than 12 by 20 feet. It may be constructed of boards standing on end, but wire netting, 1-1/2 inch mesh and No. 15 gauge wire, allows a better circulation of air. The fence should be about 6 feet high and extend into the ground about 3 feet. At the bottom, it should be bent horizontally inward a foot to turn the animals in case they try to dig out. At the top of the fence it is necessary to have an overhang of boards or sheet iron extending horizontally inward about a foot and a half. There should be a similar overhang outward if dogs or other marauders are likely to give trouble.

Shelters:

The shelter or den may be a double-walled kennel, warmly built, inside the yard, or if several animals are to be kept, it can be a building divided into compartments, each of which is connected with a yard outside. Often an existing building, a barn or shed, can be utilized as a shelter, the yards being adjacent to it. One successful breeder of raccoons shelters them in box stalls in his barn, and gives

them the run of netting enclosures outside. An important point is to have warm, comfortable quarters for the animals.

Food:

Raccoons are practically omnivorous. They relish and thrive on table scraps, such as raw or cooked meat, cooked vegetables, mush or bread and milk. They are especially fond of green corn in the roasting ear stage. Clean dishes and plenty of fresh water are very essential. One meal a day given each evening is sufficient for adults, but young animals should be fed at least twice, evening and morning.

In northern localities raccoons normally hibernate for two or three months in winter, and during that time require no food. They should be allowed to become fat in the fall preparatory for their long sleep. When cold stormy weather sets in, feeding should be suspended until spring, lest the animals be tempted to abandon their normal habit of hibernating.

Breeding:

One male is sufficient for several females. By throwing open the doors between 3 or 4 adjoining pens that number of females can have the company of a male nearly up to the time the young are expected. Before the young are born each female should be confined to her own quarters. The number of young in a litter may be anywhere from one to six, the average being about four. When not in service, males may usually be allowed to run together in a yard by themselves, but it is advisable to have a separate nest box for each animal.

